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Bulgaria

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I. Introduction

1. In June 2013, Bulgaria submitted the Mid-term Report on the implementation of 2010 UPR recommendations to the OHCHR. The Second UPR report is organized in thematic chapters corresponding to the groups in which the 106 recommendations have been classified on the basis of their subject matter. The report was prepared with the active participation of all authorities and institutions, dealing with HR, and with the involvement of NGOs. The draft was published on the official page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) for broad public discussion. In the process of preparation of the Second UPR report the main NGOs working in the field of HR took part. The report was approved by the National Coordination Mechanism on Human Rights (NCMHR).

II. Developments of the institutional and legislative framework for the promotion and protection of human rights since 2010

2. Bulgaria's genuine intention in the implementation process continues to be enhancing the national capacity for the promotion and protection of HR to the benefit of all persons residing in the territory of the country. Several changes in the institutional framework have been made since the presentation of the first report (A/HRC/16/9).

3. In 2013, by decision of the Council of Ministers (CM) a **NCMHR** was established. It is aimed to improve coordination on horizontal level among public authorities involved in the implementation of the tasks arising from Bulgaria's commitments to IHRTs[1] and other instruments. The NCMHR considers the desirability of signature and accession to new international agreements on HR and recommends amendments in the domestic legislation and administrative practices. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is the chairperson of the NCMHR. Its members are ministers, heads of State agencies and independent institutions, working on HR issues. NGOs are also represented.

4. In 2011, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) and the Ombudsman were accredited by the International Coordinating Committee and its Subcommittee on Accreditation at the UNHCHR with the status "B" as **National Authority on Human Rights**.

5. The last changes to the Ombudsman Act provide that the **Ombudsman** is acting as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) in accordance with the OP to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The functions of the Ombudsman as NPM have been facilitated by the establishment of a new Directorate.

6. Since April 2011, by a decree of the CM the ethnic issues have been transferred from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) to the Government administration. The policy related to demographic development has been transferred to the portfolio of the MLSP. **National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEII)** succeeded NCCEDI (see First UPR report, paras. 63–65) as a coordinating and consultative body, assisting the Government in formulating the policy on the integration of minority groups. The NCCEII coordinates and controls the implementation of the NAP[2] for the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015". The Chairman of the NCCEII is assigned as National Coordinator for the international initiative "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015". In 2013, an ad-hoc body was set up at the NCCEII – a Commission for the Implementation of the NRISRB[3] (2012–2020).

7. Bulgaria has introduced the practice of establishing **WGs[4] on the follow-up process of the recommendations.** The APs[5] prepared by the WGs are adopted by the Government.

The National HR Institutions are involved as members of the WGs and when appropriate, they are assigned as responsible or partner institutions.

8. In 2013 and in 2014, new **Election Codes** were adopted. The PACE, the Venice Commission and the ODIHR/OCSE recommendations had been taken into consideration in the process of elaborating the new Bulgarian Election Code, which entered into force on 5 March 2014.

9. The amendments to **the Judicial System Act** (2012) (JSA) enhanced the institutional capacity of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), the Inspectorate of the Council and the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and established a procedure for compensating citizens and legal entities for damages resulting from unreasonable delays of completed civil, administrative and criminal procedures, and of discontinued pre-trial procedures. The National Assembly (NA) (2012) tasked the Government to submit an annual report on the implementation of the decisions of the ECtHR against Bulgaria.

10. In the final report, the UNHR SR on the independence of the judges and lawyers, who visited Bulgaria in May 2011, addressed recommendations relating to the judicial reform in the country.

11. The new draft law amending the JSA is scheduled for discussion in the Parliament in the first half of 2015. On 21 January 2015 the **Updated Strategy for continuing the reform of the judiciary** was adopted by the NA. Its aim is within the next 7 years to modernize the judiciary and to complete the reform, to achieve guarantees of independence of the court by taking effective measures against corruption, political and economic pressure.

12. In 2014, the Government adopted a decision for one-time **payment of compensations** to all individual complains for which damages had been recommended by the Treaty Bodies of the UN universal instruments on HR. Meanwhile, the NCMHR approved on 22.01.2015 a legal mechanism for financial compensations under the recommendations of the Treaty Bodies on individual complains.

13. Recently, Bulgaria has been under the increasing pressure of **mixed migration and asylum flows**. The authorities are trying to apply a complex and balanced approach for addressing this difficult situation. Based on the experience and good practices, the National Integration Strategy for Individuals Granted International Protection in Bulgaria (2014–2020) was adopted in 2014.

14. Although in the reported period Bulgaria has achieved significant progress in enhancing the national capacity for the promotion and protection of HR and the HR situation in general has been vastly improved, **certain areas require further efforts to advance**. The NCMHR has approved some of them as national HR priorities for the forthcoming years – protection of the rights of the child, including conclusion of the process of deinstitutionalization; development of gender equality; further development of the historical tradition of ethnic and religious tolerance in the Bulgarian society, including the integration of Roma and other communities; protection of the rights of migrants and refugees; promotion and protection of the rights of people with disabilities; increasing the effectiveness of the national legislation and practices of national institutions on HR issues.

15. Bulgaria will be presiding over the CM of the CE[6] for the period November 2015–May 2016, will continue its campaign for being elected as member of HRC for the period 2019–2021, and will pursue the opportunity to host the Informal HR Seminar of ACEM in 2017.

III. Implementation of adopted recommendations of the first round of the UPR

A. Civil society consultations on the implementation process (recommendations 80.112, 80.110, 80.111)

16. Information on the interactive dialogue with Bulgaria as part of the UPR procedure was published on the web-site of the MFA together with the list of the received recommendations and the response to them by the Government, and the recommendations received during the considerations of the national reports presented to the UN Human rights treaty bodies. The representatives of the NGOs have been invited to participate in the meetings of the WGs on the follow-up process of the recommendations and to present their views on its implementation.

B. International human rights instruments (recommendations 80.1, 80.3, 80.4, 80.5, 80.6, 80.31)

17. In the reported period, Bulgaria signed and/or ratified:

- The OP to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Following inter-institutional consultations and consultations with the NGO sector, the Ombudsman was appointed as National preventive mechanism.
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- The Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.
- Protocol 15 to the European Convention for the Protection of the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) – soon to be ratified.

18. Bulgaria confirms its commitment to consider ratifying the OP to the ICESCR[7] and the ICPPED[8]. Inter-departmental discussions are being held.

19. The State presented:

- Consolidated Third, Fourth and Fifth periodic report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its OP;
- The Initial report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Information about the measures taken by the State in implementing the recommendations referred to strengthening of institutional mechanisms and protection against domestic violence of the UN Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW), in connection with the examination of the IV-VII periodic report of the Republic of Bulgaria;
- Information on the implementation of the recommendations of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria, as a NPM under the OPCAT;
- National assessment report and review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration, the Platform for Action and the outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the UN GA (2000) in the context of the upcoming 2015 global review of the "Beijing + 20";

- In November 2013, a joint visit of experts from the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention of the CE for the protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) was organized. In 2014 the 5th monitoring cycle carried out by ECRI was finalized. Most of the activities relating to the 3rd monitoring cycle on FCNM were implemented and a final resolution of the CM of the CE remains to be adopted.
- Answers to the General and Thematic questionnaires within the First monitoring period of the Convention of the CE for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

20. Bulgaria successfully chaired the work of the Third Committee during the 68 Session of UNGA.

21. Bulgaria would like to recall that it has extended a standing invitation to all Special procedures which could avail themselves of this invitation.

C. National human rights institutions (recommendations 80.16, 80.11, 80.12, 80.13, 80.14, 80.17)

22. The **CPD** (see First UPR report, paras. 52–57) has established a network of Regional Representative Offices (RROs) – at present 15, and works closely with NGOs partners. Over the past three years there has been an increase in the number of proceedings brought before the CPD.

23. The capacity of **the Ombudsman** has been strengthened. His extended powers include: presenting opinions to the CM and the NA on draft laws concerning HR protection and on the ratification of IHRTs; referrals to the Constitutional Court and protection of the rights of the child; broad powers in relation to the places for persons deprived of their liberty or places where persons are detained.

D. Reform of the judicial system. Fight against corruption, organized crimes and conflict of interests (recommendations 80.62, 80.63, 80.65, 80.66, 80.64, 80.67, 80.113, 80.108)

24. The **reform of the Bulgarian judicial system** has continued. The amendments to the JSA address the issues of publicity and transparency in the election of members of the SJC and the establishment of a procedure for assessment of complaints by the SJC Inspectorate against violation of the right to have the case assessed and decided in a reasonable time. Furthermore, they provide for the establishment of a legal tool within the Inspectorate for compensation of the damages resulting from the delay of the process (compensatory tool). The right to lodge complaints is available to all categories of persons which could potentially be affected by delays of the procedure.

25. The Responsibility of the State and the Municipalities for Damages Act was amended ensuring that the affected persons would receive compensations for the damages caused through violation of a right conferred by the ECHR, committed by the State or its authorities or officials. Until now the Inspectorate at the SJC has sent to the Ministry of Justice (MJ) 1,002 applications.

26. Amendments to the Methodology for attestation of judges, prosecutors and investigators have been adopted. An additional restriction on the participation of magistrates as members of this committee was introduced.

27. The Legal Assistance Act (LAA) has been amended to widen the scope of socially disadvantaged groups having effective access to justice. The **National Legal Aid Bureau (NLAB)** opened in 2013 a "Legal Aid Hotline" and Regional Legal Aid Centres for legal advice free of charge. The new activities of the Bureau have been performed with the financial support of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism (NFM) in partnership with the Open Society Institute and the CE. Changes in the Regulation of the structure and operation of NLAB have been adopted, introducing new activities and models for legal advice and consultation of socially disadvantaged people. A Strategy for LADI[9] for the period 2014–2019 has been adopted, with a focus on control over legal aid provision, improvement of legal aid to children who are victims of crime and traffic, refugees and other citizens from vulnerable social groups.

28. The **anti-corruption efforts** within the public administration are co-ordinated by the Commission for the Prevention and Countering of Corruption (CPCC) within the CM. The organisation of the Commission's work is carried out by the Directorate "General Inspectorate" (GI) responsible to the Prime Minister. All 28 regions in Bulgaria have anti-corruption Councils, which have been strengthened in recent years to include representatives from local government, territorial structures, the judiciary, various ministries, civil society and the business community. By 2013, 20 Inspectorates in the system of the central executive power operated.

29. The BORKOR is the newest project implemented by the Centre for prevention and countering of corruption and organised crime. At the National Insurance Institute, the National Health Insurance Fund, the State Fund "Agriculture" and other independent committees Inspectorates were created to control the activities.

30. An Integrated Strategy for Prevention and Countering of Corruption adopted by the Government has been applied. Each year, the CPCC approves APs containing specific measures carried out by the central administration and prepares annual reports on their implementation. A Methodology for corruption risk assessment has been approved and applied by the Inspectorates to the ministers and heads of State agencies. In 2014, the Methodology was supplemented with corruption risk indicators applicable to the whole administration.

31. By order of the Prosecutor General a package of measures has been approved, aimed to counter organised crime and corruption. A total of 699 prosecutorial statements have been filed at court and 424 persons have been sentenced.

32. The Corruption Monitoring System, developed by the NGO Centre for the Study of Democracy, was recognized by the UN as the best national system for corruption monitoring.

33. **The fight against organised crime** has been advanced by a number of procedural and institutional reforms. In 2011–2012, specialised prosecutor offices and courts to deal with organised crime were established. A new Act on Forfeiture on the Exchequer of Unlawfully Acquired Assets has been adopted. The Act provides for confiscation of illegal assets through a procedure in civil courts which can be launched upon the initiation of judicial investigations for a number of serious crimes and upon certain administrative infringements. A Commission for Forfeiture of Unlawfully Acquired Assets, a specialised body which identifies unlawfully acquired assets with the assistance of local units and local authorities, has been established. Changes to the Penal Code (PC) have been undertaken to allow a more effective penal response to serious and organised crime.

34. The resources for police investigations have been increased. The number of the police officers engaged in the investigation has increased from 2000 in 2010 to 8,000 at present. The State Agency for National Security cooperates actively with Europol, DEA-USA, Interpol, Eurojust, Frontex and SELEC. The European mechanism for international

cooperation is being successfully applied. Trainings for the magistrates (some of them organized in partnership with Interpol, Eurojust, Spain, Germany, Italy, France, and the USA) have been provided with special focus on organized groups acting in the fields of narcotics dissemination, money laundering, physical injuries, human trafficking and high technology crimes.

35. An Act on the prevention and ascertainment of **conflicts of interest** has been adopted and an independent body - a Commission for Prevention and Ascertainment of Conflict of Interest (CPACI), has been set up. Some of the signals to the Inspectorates at the administrative units, which made 848 inspections, have been forwarded to the CPACI. 154 files have been sent to the proceedings authorities and the labour contracts of 24 employees were terminated.

36. In 2011, the Government adopted a Concept for State policy in the field of **juvenile justice**, which envisages specialization of the judicial system without creating specialized courts. An AP has been developed for the period 2013–2020, which is consistent with the main strategic documents – the Vision for Deinstitutionalization of Children and the Strategy for Crime Prevention (2012–2020).

37. Since 2012, the specialized Department "Combating crimes committed by minors and offenses against minors" has been operating within the Supreme Prosecutor's Office of Cassation. The Department is supported by a National network of prosecutors for countering crimes committed by minors. An agreement with the Swiss Government under the programme "Strengthening the legal and institutional capacity of the judiciary with regard to juvenile justice" has been signed.

38. Amendments in the LAA to provide for free of charge legal aid to children at risk have been made. The MJ introduced amendments in the PC for a special chapter, defining legal norms on the criminal liability of minors. Based on two analysis of the system of juvenile justice, prepared by NGOs, and the International Institute on Children Rights, Switzerland, the MJ has presented a report and has set up a WG to elaborate special laws in the field of child justice on preventing and countering the behaviour of children in conflict.

39. Bulgaria fully implements all provisions of the ICCPR and the ECHR, and strictly **implements the decisions of the ECtHR** vis-à-vis Bulgaria. Referring to the ECHR, it should be recalled that there is no provision related to "minority rights".

E. Education in human rights (recommendations 80.92, 80.28, 80.44, 80.62)

40. Formal civic education is based on the core international instruments on HR. According to the State Education Requirements for **civic education** the HR are regarded as a basis for the overall personal development of youth. Non-formal education contributes to enriching students' practical experience in the field of the functioning of HR principles, for example the National Programme "The School – Students' Territory". Issues pertaining to prevention of discrimination are included in senior high school curricula as part of general educational subjects.

41. Appropriate education and training in HR has been continuously provided by the **Academy of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the NIJ**. A total of 800 employees of MoI have undergone training under the discipline of "HR Protection" to get acquainted with the decisions of the ECtHR.

42. The NIJ held training sessions on ECHR in cooperation with the CE and with the participation of judges from the ECtHR, prosecutors and investigators. The implementation of the Project "Increasing the capacity of the judiciary and training on the ECHR" has been

launched. The NIJ includes a training module in non-discrimination under the ECHR, the relevant Bulgarian legislation and case law. In 2013–2014, NIJ organized 27 events dedicated to issues related to HR. 900 judges, prosecutors, inspectors, investigators, court officials, experts and officials from the MJ and MoI, and NGOs representatives took part in them. Through exchange with the Netherlands a multiannual training programme "Police, ethics and HR" with a total of 279 trainings was conducted for 4,803 police officers. A toolkit has been developed which is used in the current on-the-job training.

43. The topic of hate crimes prevention has been integrated in the curriculum of the MoI Academy. A new discipline "Protection from Discrimination" has been introduced. MoI conducts regular short on-the-job trainings for police officers directed towards the work of the police in multi-ethnic environment. A total of 109,573 officers have been trained.

44. A MoU[10] signed between MoI and the ODIHR of OSCE envisages the organization of training in the field of combating hate crimes. The CPD organized training workshops for specialists from the Juvenile Offenders Directorates. In 2014, the project "Training of the law-enforcement for the legal use of force, respect for HR and further development of the skills for work in a multi-ethnic environment", financed by the NFM was started. Under the EU Programme "Prevention of and Fight against Crime", the MoI developed a specific project on "Police training in the European standards of HR protection". A project "European Police and Respect for HRs" was executed in partnership with Belgium, Germany and Poland, and the CPD and NGOs.

F. Non-discrimination (recommendations 80.8, 80.44, 80.43, 80.100, 80.103, 80.40)

45. The authorities have continued its consistent policies aimed at preventing and eliminating any form of discrimination, including against the LGBT persons. All Bulgarian citizens are given the opportunity to freely state their sexual orientation and gender identity.

46. Under the project "Combating discrimination for a fair society", financed by the EU, the CPD implemented five national training seminars. Projects for the creation of locally based Prevention Centres in Sofia, Burgas and Targovishte were developed in collaboration with the MoI of Germany.

47. In 2011, the Ombudsman extended a recommendation to the Legislative and Executive branches to criminalize offences incited by homophobia. In 2012, the Ombudsman reviewed a complaint alleging ethnic (Roma minority) discrimination.

48. In 2012 and 2013, the NCCEII held working meetings with the participation of Members of Parliament, the CPD and the MFA for improving the work and coordination among authorities dealing with HR, anti-discrimination, order of law and integration. On 8 April 2014, the international day of Roma people, the NCCEII held a round table with the broad participation of MPs, the CPD, Roma NGOs, representatives of diplomatic missions.

G. Equal opportunities for women and men (recommendations 80.7, 80.109, 80.32, 80.33, 80.34, 80.36, 80.37, 80.38)

49. The constitutional principle of equality before the law is further developed. In accordance with the Directive 2010/41/EU concerning persons in a self-employed capacity amendments have been introduced to the Social Insurance Code. In 2014, a draft Gender Equality Act was developed. Amendments in the regulation of the national Council on Gender Equality were adopted, strengthening its competences. Implementing the NSPGE[11] (2009–2015), the APs for 2014 and 2015 focus on measures for promoting gender equality

in decision-making. The MLSP and the CPD take joint actions to create conditions for reducing and eliminating the differences in remuneration.

50. The Ministry of Education and Science (MES) has introduced special blocks on the gender equality and the social dimensions of both genders in the school programmes. The MSLP carries out various raising awareness programmes on issues related to gender equality, including on **combating negative stereotypes** about women and their social roles.

51. The Council for Electronic Media (CEM) works in close cooperation with the CPD and carries out regular supervision of the programs and considers possible sexist advertisements. A focused monitoring of the activities of media service providers has been held.

52. The Project "Female Leaders in Security and Defence" brings into focus the need to link the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 and gender mainstreaming. A draft of a NP[12] for implementation of the resolution is under preparation.

53. At present 50% of the Bulgarian Members in the EP are women and two Bulgarian women serve consecutively as EU commissioners. The Mayor of the capital city is a woman as well. The NA is lead by a Chairwoman.

54. Positive developments have occurred in the business sector. Women currently working in 51 state-managed trade companies, account for 43% of the members of their governing bodies. Unemployed women are offered the opportunity to start their own business by receiving a grant under a scheme of European funding.

H. Rights of the child (recommendations 80.78, 80.20, 80.71, 80.77, 80.15, 80.58, 80.27, 80.75, 80.72, 80.73, 80.19, 80.98, 80.79, 80.80)

55. Under the National Strategy for Deinstitutionalization (see First UPR report, paras. 102–112) an AP has been elaborated in collaboration with the European Commission (EC) and NGOs. The main purpose of the document is by 2025 all specialized institutions to be closed and to be replaced with new types of social services (SS). In 2012, the Government organized a Ministerial high level conference "Ending the Placement of Children Under Three in Institutions: Support Nurturing Families for All Young Children" with the support of UNICEF and under the patronage of President Mr. Rosen Plevneliev.

56. The data proves a stable downward trend in the number of children in specialized institutions (SI). In 2014, the total number of children placed in families of relatives was 6,711, 2,231 children were placed in foster families and the total number of approved foster families was 2,249. A progress was made for development of SS for children in the community. The network of Social Support Centres developed further.

57. The active work on deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities continued. By the end of 2015, 10 institutions are to be closed and by 2025 – the remaining institutions for mentally disabled children, together with 1 institution for physically disabled children. 36 SI were closed and 103 new SS for children were opened. As of 2014, 391 SS in the community for children have operated in the form of public delegated services, with a total capacity of 9,937 places. The input of NGOs is essential.

58. In relation to the 238 reported death cases of children in SI, 22 inspections have been conducted. In 2010, amendments were adopted to the Health Act, which introduced the requirement for anatomical pathologist autopsy in cases of a death of a child placed outside the family under the Child Protection Act (CPA). Consequently, amendments to the Ordinance on criteria and standards for SS for children have been introduced and a new standard for resident services (RS) and services in SI has been adopted.

59. In 2013–2014, 64 trainings of 1,511 employees were organized. 362 positions for social workers were occupied. Within the project "Development of the system for planning and provision of social services at regional level", 28 trainings were delivered with the participation of 532 persons.

60. Amendments in the Regulation for the Implementation of the Social Assistance Act (SAA), effective as of 01.01.2015, provide for application of a differentiated approach in defining the standards for financing SS to **children with disabilities** through municipal budgets. 99 centres are functioning on the territory of the country with a total capacity of 3,740 places.

61. The State provides annually free textbooks and Braille textbooks for students with special educational needs. The number of children and students with special educational needs receiving integrated education in kindergartens, general education and vocational schools has increased 18 times. The number of students undergoing integrated education is 1,660, supported by 1,364 specialists. Special pedagogues have started working on 11 new framework curricula for drafting individual study programmes.

62. In 84 pilot comprehensive schools, teams of specialists have been formed, 84 resource cabinets have been furnished and equipped. Under the National Programme "Creation of Accessible Architectural Environment" 39 schools have been reconstructed. A model of comprising training of 1,654 students with special educational needs has been built. In 2014, 10 pilot general education schools and 1 kindergarten were approved.

63. After the accession to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry **Adoption**, an amendment in the Family Code (FC) introduced the compulsory registration of the child to be adopted and the prospective adoptive parents as an additional condition for permission of full adoption. The selection of the suitable adoptive parent for a registered child is made by the Adoption Council (AC) with the respective Regional Social Assistance Directorate and by the Intercountry AC. The prior accommodation with a family for the purposes of future adoption provided for in the Hague Convention is not envisaged in the Bulgarian legislation, respectively Bulgaria issued a declaration of non-acceptance.

64. Many amendments to the legal framework have been made in the area of international adoptions on the terms and procedure for keeping international adoption registers and granting consent by the MJ and for granting and withdrawal of permits for international adoption mediation and for pursuit and termination of the activity of accredited organisations. The amendments focus on the personal contact of the adoptive parent with the child. The abrogation of the secrecy of adoption is under consideration.

I. Social and economic rights (recommendations 80.89, 80.90, 80.74, 80.25, 80.76, 80.88, 80.91, 80.30, 80.87)

65. The NRPRB (2011–2015)[13] contains the general goal of reducing the number of people living in poverty. In 2012 and 2013, two key **strategic documents** were adopted: the National Development Programme Bulgaria 2020 and the National Strategy for Reducing Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion 2020. One of the main goals until 2020 is the number of people living in poverty to be reduced by 260,000, and the number of children aged 0–18 – by 78,000. NAPE[14] provides for programmes and specific measures to enhance employment and upgrade qualification among the vulnerable groups. In 2012, the Government has adopted a National Concept for support of active life for aged people developed in 2014 with a National Strategy for Long-term Care. The Strategy is the key underlying document aimed to reform the care for older people and people with disabilities.

66. The **employment policy** targets: unemployed youth up to 29 years, unemployed over 50 years, long-term unemployed, unemployed with disabilities, unemployed Roma, inactive persons etc. In 2011, the programs and the measures under the NAPE covered 50,105 persons, 57% of which remained permanently employed. In 2012, new youth employment promotion initiatives were launched, such as the National Initiative "Jobs for Young People in Bulgaria" and "Creating institutional capacity of the labour market, social inclusion and healthcare". In 2013, 196 regional programmes are implemented, compared to 168 in 2012 and 154 in 2011.

67. In 2011, a Long-term strategy for **employment of persons with disabilities** 2011–2020 was elaborated. Biannual APs were drawn up and fulfilled for the period 2012–2013. Under the National Programme "Assistants to People with Disabilities", funding of 11,125 personal assistants was secured. Average monthly benefits for people with disabilities were provided to 509,170 persons, including 20,147 children.

68. The Agency for People with Disabilities has continued financing programmes for employment of people with disabilities. 32 projects for permanently disabled and damaged people to start up their own economic activity and another 12 projects for providing access, adaptation and equipment of work places for people with disabilities in specialised and ordinary working environment were financed. The target projects of specialised enterprises and cooperatives with granted financing numbered 33.

69. In 2012, various forms of family **assistance** offered support to more than 884,000 children. The funds for energy allowances from the State budget were provided. In 2012, the scope of persons entitled to social assistance was extended by the inclusion of foreigners possessing a long-term residence permit. In 2013, 251,876 persons received targeted aid for heating. Under the Family Children Benefits Act (FCBA) children were supported on different types of family child benefits. In 2014, differentiated amounts of monthly benefits for children until completion of high school were introduced. All students placed in SI and in SS of residential type receive monthly per diem expenses the amount of which has been increased. Since 2014, the amount of the monthly pay to professional foster families has risen.

70. A sustained trend of increasing the number of community-based **social services** (CBSS) has been registered. In 2013, the number of CBSS increased and reached 738, and the number of SI was 247 with capacity for 15,283 persons. In 2012, the capacity of 16 SI for elderly and for people with disabilities was reduced and 18 new community-based residential-type social services were launched. 591 SS operated in the country's territory as a publicly delegated activity with a total capacity of 19,961 places. The number of children using SS in the community, including of residential type, rose to 10,344.

71. In 2012, the scheme "Home Assistance" was implemented under OPHRD[15] for the purpose of enlarging the scope of the existing social home patronage. Until 31.12.2013, 4,511 unemployed persons in the country were employed in the activity "Personal Assistant".

72. In 2011, a project for **early social inclusion of children** started in 60 municipalities. In 2012, funding agreements were signed with another 10 municipalities. In the school year 2013/2014, 87,3% of the children who were 5 years old and 97,6% of those who are 6 years old were covered by the pre-school training and around 72% of all students at grades I and II were included in the full-day training scheme. In 2012, a Strategy on preventing early drop outs from school (2012–2020) was elaborated, which together with the provisions of the Youth and Pre-school Education Act created the framework of competitive education towards employment and social inclusion. Within the Social Inclusion Project, agreements were signed through which 66 municipalities started providing new types of services for children and families. In 29 municipalities 1,868 new places in crèches and kindergartens

were opened. In 2014, 19 municipalities put into operation 1,257 new places in total in crèches and kindergartens.

73. Specific measures were implemented to create conditions for increased employment of unemployed **Roma** and to promote entrepreneurship. Under the project "Activating the non-active persons" mediators of Roma origin persuade non-active persons to get registered in the labour bureaus. In 2012, jobs were provided to 11,478 unemployed persons of Roma origin.

74. The position of the health mediators (HM) is institutionalized and included in the National Register of Professions. Currently there are 130 HM in 80 municipalities. In 2013, the Secretariat of NCCEII initiated bilateral meetings (in Germany and France) in relation to the poverty-driven migration.

75. The Ministry of Health (MH) and its 28 regional structures in cooperation with more than 50 NGOs, has been implementing a NPPC[16] of **HIV and STIs** (2008–2015 г.) and a Program "Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS", financed by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF). With the MH funding, modern diagnostic kits have been supplied for HIV, virus hepatitis B and C, syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections testing. Youth-tailored services are provided, free of charge and anonymous, for HIV and STI testing and consultation. A network of 19 easily accessible Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centres available in 15 cities is established for providing medical consultations for HIV and STI. The scope of provision of such services has been expended with additional 17 mobile medical consulting rooms. A network of 18 youth NGO's with more than 1,000 trainers has been built on the principle of "peer-to-peer training" for the provision of free services.

J. Rights of persons belonging to minorities groups (recommendations 80.18, 80.102, 80.22, 80.26, 80.29, 80.104, 80.101, 80.105, 80.70, 80.93, 80.94, 80.95, 80.96, 80.97, 80.106, 80.82)

76. An IWG[17] for resource support of the Roma integration with EU funds is functioning to the NCCEII, comprising representatives of the managing authorities of the operational programmes, institutions and NGOs.

77. In 2011, the National Roma Integration Strategy **(2012–2020) (NRISRB)**[18] has been developed. The Strategy corresponds to and incorporates the objectives and principles of the main policy documents[19] on integration. It covers six priority areas of the integration policy: education, health, housing, employment, rule of law and non-discrimination, culture and media. The Strategy's AP is structured to be implemented in two phases: 2012–2014 and 2014–2020. The NRISRB and the AP were adopted by the Government and approved by the NA. In 2012, regional and local strategies for the integration of Roma and APs to them were also elaborated. Currently, there are 28 regional strategies and 220 municipal APs in place, developed on the basis of analysis of the needs and specifics of local communities.

78. An agreement for Social Inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups has been signed under the Bulgarian-Swiss co-operation programme. Six Bulgarian municiplaities have been included in a joint programme of the EC and of the CE ROMED2/ROMACT, which is aimed at strengthening the capacity of local institutions and the Roma community. In implementation of the Strategy, pilot AP's ranging until 2020 have been developed.

79. The Bulgarian authorities have supported, through a state subsidy under the National Community Centres Act, the capacity of 3,575 community centres to preserve cultural identity. About 1,000 of them have attracted representatives of minority groups within their

structure or events. The State has additionally financed activities of theatres for different ethnic groups. The museums and public libraries also work actively for preserving the cultural identity.

80. The key document about the **health** status of disadvantaged groups is the HSDPBEM as part of the National Health Strategy. Health and social centres have been established with the support of the GF. They have been managed by local Roma organizations working with the Roma communities and have been developed in the Roma residential areas in eight cities. Health and social services have been offered by specially trained Roma HM and mobile medical cabinets. In 2014, the number of HM increased to 150 in 79 target municipalities in 25 regions. Funds were allocated for extending the network of HM in 2015 and their number is set to rise to 170 persons. Preventive medical checks have been carried out on the spot in Roma settlements by 23 mobile medical units. Children aged 0–18 were immunised, in accordance with the National Immunisation Calendar.

81. The authorities have undertaken efforts to prevent the formation of school classes on ethnic grounds and not to allow enrolment in schools only for Roma pupils. NGOs participate in the implementation of the objectives within the **"Education"** priority of the NRISRB. The EICPEM[20] Centre develops, finances[21] and supports 118 projects, focusing on equal access to quality education for children from minority groups. More than 4,000 Roma children have been successfully integrated into mainstream schools. Over 4,500 teachers have passed short training courses and acquired the skills to work in a culturally diverse educational environment. In 2012/2013 school year, 240 schools offered the opportunity to study Roma folklore to over 5,400 pupils. 300 pedagogical specialists have been trained to work in multicultural environment and 1,000 children from minority groups have been integrated into the educational system. In 2013/2014 school year, 101 groups with a total number of 1,542 students were formed on the subject "Ethnic folklore-Roma folklore".

82. Among the national objectives under the "Europe 2020" Strategy is that the relative share of early leavers of the educational system should drop to 11% and the relative share of persons in the age group 30–34 with higher level of education should rise to 36% by 2020. The number of **drop-outs from school** decreased from 6,680 in the 2009/2010 school year to 5,615 in 2010/2011. A Strategy for RSSDEL[22] (2013–2020) and an AP for 2015 were adopted. Monthly child benefits payment until completion of secondary education has been provided. For the last year the school coverage of 5-year-olds has been increased to 20% (66% of municipalities were covered by the measure). For the 6-year olds the coverage is already over 97%. The number of Roma children covered by the mandatory two-year school-preparation training has also increased. The percentage of children enrolled in kindergartens in the school year 2011/2012 was 81.5%.

83. In 2009–2012, the activities within the NPIHCRRB were focused on the compilation of cadastre maps and registers as a basis for urban development plans. Opportunities for legalizing illegally built **houses** were also considered. In 2011, 16,759 Roma and in 2012, 30,930 Roma benefitted from the implemented projects and enjoy currently better educational, social, cultural and physical infrastructure. A project implemented with the financial assistance of the EU, aims at addressing social inclusion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the municipalities. People living in social housing have been provided with a "social package" – complementary services for access to employment, education and social inclusion.

84. Community cultural clubs maintained by the **Armenian, Roma, Turkish and Hebrew** communities received State subsidies. Financial assistance was provided for various cultural events, educational projects, extra-curricular education programmes. The temples of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Plovdiv, Varna, Ruse and Silistra have the

status of cultural heritage and are financially supported by the local authorities. Armenian is studied as mother tongue in Sofia, Plovdiv, and Burgas. There are two municipal schools in Sofia and one in Plovdiv for pupils of Armenian origin studying Armenian.

85. There is no discriminatory treatment in connection with the construction of places of worship of religious denominations in the country. Places of worship are constructed according to the standard procedure, provided for in the Spatial Development Act, and are not subject to any special requirements. Under the Local Government and Local Administration Act, prayer houses of all faiths are exempt from property tax and garbage tax. The PC criminalizes acts against freedom of religion and beliefs and public incitement to violence or hate on religious grounds.

K. Fight against racism, xenophobia, hate speech and hate crimes (recommendations 80.93, 80.42, 80.9, 80.84)

86. Offences against national and racial equality are criminalised under the PC and qualified with high degree of social danger. Amendments have been introduced to the PC by adding new grounds of discrimination and specifically criminalizing public incitement to violence or hate on ethnic grounds. In 2013, 13 pre-trial investigations were initiated, 3 indictments against four persons were brought to court and 3 persons were sentenced.

87. Implementing the MoU between the MoI and the OSCE/ODIHR, in March 2012 the first stage of the TAHCLE[25] Programme – training of trainers on hate crimes for the law-enforcement was realized in the Academy of the MoI. The police officers underwent on-the-job **training** as part of the annual professional training programme. Bulgaria is the first state where the TAHCLE Programme has been fully implemented.

88. The Radio and Television Act (RTA) stipulates the "inadmissibility of broadcasts which incite to **hatred on grounds of race, sex, religion or nationality**". The CEM as an independent regulator supervises the activities of radio and television broadcasters and has the power to impose fines and to revoke the broadcasting licenses. The CEM has examined several cases of RTA violations and in 4 of them has issued acts with punitive measures.

89. The special section "Media" in the NRISRB provides for the creation of conditions for equitable representation of the Roma community, changing the negative image of Roma and countering "hate speech" in the print and electronic media. The CPD also monitors and renders decisions on complaints and warnings against publications containing ethnic intolerance.

L. Fight against all forms of violence (recommendations 80.28, 80.60, 80.45, 80.46, 80.49, 80.35, 80.68, 80.21, 80.48, 80.50, 80.51, 80.52)

90. Bulgaria accepted the recommendation on **appropriate use of force** by the police on the premise that it is not a serious and widespread problem.

91. In 2012, amendments to the Ministry of Interior Act introduced the standard "absolute necessity" in the use of weapons, physical force and auxiliary devices by the police authorities. All training programs at the Academy of MoI were updated accordingly. A new course was introduced with an emphasis on the criteria of "absolute necessity" in the use of firearms, auxiliary means and physical force. Six courses on Community Policing were also conducted. A mechanism allows the citizens to seek compensation if they have suffered damages from the irregular activities of the State authorities. In 2014, a new project "Training of the law-enforcement on legal use of force, respecting the HR and further enhancement of the skills for work in a multi-ethnic environment" started. A New

Code of Ethics for the Behaviour of the Civil Servants of the MoI was approved. During the period 2010–2014, a total of 152 new file cases and pre-trial proceeding for police violence were reported. 36 prosecutorial statements were filed at court. In 2013, 15 persons were brought to court and 5 persons were convicted.

92. The authorities together with the national HR institutions, relevant NGOs, and media carry out regular public campaigns and initiatives aimed at raising the awareness of **domestic violence** (DV) and increasing the knowledge about the existing protection procedures. Such activities are included in the annual National Programme for PPDV[24]. The criminal sexual intercourse against the will of the victim is criminalized under the PC. In the period 2011–2013, for criminal sexual offences a total of 2.558 new file cases and pre-trial proceeding were reported. 1.037 prosecutorial statements were filed at court against 798 persons, of whom 426 were sentenced.

93. The website of the MoI http://www.mvr.bg/offers accessible information for **victims of DV**. An Instruction for cooperation between MoI and MLSP for protection against DV and Methodological guidelines for the actions of the police authorities under the Protection against DV Act have been approved.

94. There is a national 24-hour hotline for victims of DV. Support to the victims of DV has also been provided through the Crisis Centres (CC). This service can be also used by children – victims of violence, of trafficking in human beings, and runaway children. A total of 15 CC for children and 4 CC for children and adults operate around the country. Successfully operates a national helpline for children "116.111". In September 2012, a uniform Pan-European number "116.000" for missing children was introduced.

95. Support services are also provided in 66 Social Rehabilitation and Integration Centres (SRICs) through activities of rehabilitation, social and legal consulting, implementation of individual programmes for social inclusion, etc. SRICs work in cooperation with CCs.

96. In 2012, the NIJ organized a distance-education course for magistrates on "The proceedings of imposing measures for protection against DV". At regional level, together with NGOs, approximately 60 projects and preventive events were organized and over 800 police officers underwent training. In the framework of the Programme for DV and violence based on gender as part of the MoU between Norway and Bulgaria, a project for improvement of the national legal framework and strengthening of the capacity of the competent institutions was started. For the first time budgets designated for financing of projects for prevention and protection against DV were provided to NGOs.

97. In the system of MoI, national and regional coordinators on the problems of DV were designated. As of 2013, teams for application of the National Coordination Mechanism against violence were set up and started operation. A total of 5.941 signals have been filed, 5.711 proceedings and 917 pre-trial proceeding have been initiated jointly with the regional Prosecutor's Offices.

98. In 2012, a NP for the Prevention of **Violence against Children** for the period to 2014 was approved. In June 2014, the project for the creation of a National system for early alerts for abducted/missing in Bulgaria was finalized.

99. Within the Bulgarian-Swiss Programme for Cooperation and Development, the Criminal Police started the "Improvement of child protection and prevention of juvenile crime" project. A national database is being created for registration of the cases of juvenile crimes. For the period of one year, 5 courses have been conducted in the Academy of the MoI on the topic of "Specialized hearing of children who are victims or at risk of violence".

M. Rights of the persons deprived of their liberty (recommendations 80.69, 80.47)

100. Legislative amendments from December 2012 guarantee that all detainees are health insured. Due to the economic and financial crisis the implementation of the amendments to the Execution of Penalties and Detention Act (EPDA), regulating the minimum living area of a prisoner to 4 square meters, has been postponed to January 2019.

101. The allocated capital expenditure did not allow the undertaking of comprehensive actions for the improvement of the living conditions in the prisons. Despite of the reduced **budgetary funds** in 2011, substantial refurbishments were made in 6 prisons and places of detention. In 2012, the living conditions were improved and urgent refurbishment was made in another 6 prisons and places of detention. The conditions in some of the premises have been overhauled, while others have been renovated with EU funding. The rest of the premises are being renovated step by step. The sanitary requirements are observed everywhere. A number of improvements have been introduced to the 24-hour detention. The practice of civil monitoring has been introduced to the MoI structures, audio and video devices have been mounted at the police stations. The NGO Centre for the Study of Democracy contributed in piloting for the first time an innovative Prison Conditions Monitoring Index. Still, the conditions in the prisons are unsatisfactory, which impedes an effective corrective impact of punishment, provision of meaningful engagement, educational activities and corrective programmes.

102. The **Norwegian financial mechanism** provides resources to the projects: "Improving the standards in prisons and detention places through refurbishment of the infrastructure in order to guarantee the respect of human rights", "Improving the competence of the staff in the psychological selection and counselling" and "Strengthening the implementation of probation measures in accordance with European standards and a system of electronic monitoring".

103. The authorities have been working with priority to find a suitable terrain for the construction of a **new close-type prison**. The expert consultations on its location and financing are on-going.

104. Under the EPDA, a Council on Serving Jail Sentences has been set up at the MJ. The newly appointed officers are trained on the relevant international legal acts, the European legislation and the recommendations of the CAT. The on-the-job vocational **training** and courses for professional training of different duration have been delivered. The CPD also carries out seminars, trainings programmes and workshops for police, judiciary and prison officials.

105. In 2013, the "Mechanism for the Provision of **Legal Assistance** by Lawyers on Duty in the first 24 hours of police detention" project was launched and completed by the NLAB in cooperation with the Open Society Institute. The results achieved were regulated by the amendments of the LAA, in force from 2013.

N. Trafficking in persons (recommendations 80.23, 80.53, 80.54, 80.109, 80.55, 80.56, 80.57, 80.61)

106. Strengthening the capacity of the **National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (NCCTHB)** has continued by the establishment of 3 new local commissions. Shelters for temporary housing of victims of human trafficking (HT) and specialized centres for protection and support of victims of HT have been built and equipped. The CM has adopted Annual National Programmes for prevention and counteraction of THB and protection of victims.

107. The referral mechanisms for victims of trafficking and for care in cases of unaccompanied children and children – victims of trafficking returning from abroad have been developed. A National Council for assistance and compensation to victims of crime, including HT has been established; victims are entitled to free legal aid, and compensation in criminal and civil proceedings. In 2011, a Network of volunteers to help victims of HT (including Roma leaders volunteers) was also established with the National and Local Commissions; a special Academy for volunteers' trainings is annually organized.

108. In 2013, the amendments to the PC extended the application scope of the HT offence to cover HT related removal of tissue, body fluid or cell from the victim. Amendments to the Countering Trafficking in Human Beings Act (CTHBA) extended the scope of persons to whom protection may be granted. The approach in defining the concept of "trafficking in human beings" was aligned in the PC, the CTHBA and the CPA.

109. In partnership with local authorities, academic institutions and NGOs, various **prevention** information campaigns have been launched to raise public awareness and to create public intolerance to the phenomenon within the risk groups of the population. With the involvement of the business sector a Code of Conduct for Prevention of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Tourism has been developed. The project is implemented as a joint effort of the State Agency for Child Protection, the OSCE and NGOs. The specific vulnerability of the Roma is covered by the National Program for prevention and counteraction to HT and protection of victims.

110. Campaigns targeting seasonal work have been launched. The NCCTHB has organised multidisciplinary trainings for police officers, prosecutors, judges and other officials working in the field of the fight against THB, including journalists, teachers and educational advisers, priests and etc. The Academy of the MoI organizes courses for employees of the MoI. Joint trainings are held at the NIJ, the Academy of the MoI and the Diplomatic Institute to the MFA.

111. The shelters for temporary accommodation of victims of trafficking and the CCs have continued to deliver appropriate assistance. Children between 6 and 18 years of age, victims of trafficking and/or other violence, are eligible for accommodation for up to 6 months. Women victims of trafficking are accommodated in the two state shelters.

112. The **bilateral and multilateral cooperation** with the countries of destination has been approved and the cooperation within Europol, Eurojust and the Bureau SIRENE has been further strengthened. Bulgaria is participating in joint teams on THB with several EU MS (France, Germany, the Netherlands, etc.). Under the established practice in investigating cases of THB, a check is also initiated for presence of crime activity relevant to money laundering.

113. An operational real-time exchange of information for possible victims and their traffickers is performed with the police authorities of the EU MS. Common contact centres have been established at the four of the Bulgarian five borders for a real-time information exchange, including the cases on THB.

114. The NCCTHB is the coordinator for a joint biannual project with France: "Prevention of HT of persons belonging to ethnic minorities with focus on Roma in Bulgaria". It is a partner of the Romanian Agency against Trafficking in Persons in two projects on reducing the number of Romanian and Bulgarian victims and on integrated approach for prevention of labour exploitation. Other partners are NGOs from Greece and Cyprus, the MoI of Hungary and FYROM. The NCCTHB is also a partner of the French MFEA and the MoI of Portugal in the projects on development of common guidelines and procedures for the identification of victims of trafficking and on Pan-European monitoring of THB. The Netherlands, Greece and Romania also participate in the first one. Partners of the "VICTOR" project are the "Centre Nadja" Foundation, the Greek NGO "The Smile of

the Child", international organizations and 15 government institutions and NGOs from Slovenia, Romania, Serbia, Moldova and Ukraine. Bulgaria is among the leading countries in the implementation of the EMPACT project of Europol, rated as one of the most successful to date.

115. In 2011, Bulgaria hosted the Regional Conference on HT for labour exploitation. Within the Danube Strategy, a Regional conference was held on combating THB with the participation of 8 Danube Region countries. During the 20th Session of the UN HRC, Bulgaria and Greece have organized a joint event on HT. The CE, in partnership with the NCCTHB has organized an International Conference on expert level "Making prevention work: Addressing the root causes of HT in Europe".

O. Rights of the refugees and migrants (recommendations 80.10, 80.99, 80.41)

116. According to the Constitution and to the Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (FRBA) the legally residing foreigners shall enjoy all rights, except those that require Bulgarian citizenship. The national **legal framework** on refugees and migrants has been harmonized with the EU legislation and is in line with the 1951 CSR and the OP thereto. The amendments to the FRBA have extended its scope to cover foreigners in need of international protection.

117. Since 2013, Bulgaria has been facing an increased pressure by mixed migration flows. As a result, an Operational plan, providing expert, technical and operational assistance from EASO[25] was signed. The European Refugee Fund 2013 Annual program for Bulgaria was revised with emergency measures. The financial assistance was designed to increase the capacity of the reception centres (RC), to improve the initial adaptation of the asylum seekers, and to meet the minimum living conditions standards of the EU and UN in the newfound Regional Refugee Centre (RRC). In 2014, State Agency for Refugees (SAR) granted a total of 1,838 humanitarian and 5,162 refugee statuses.

118. The Border Police has actively cooperated with UNHCR and the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC) on the basis of the Tripartite MoU. Representatives of UNHCR and BHC monitor all the borders and accommodation facilities. The UNHCR Representative in Bulgaria organizes training with the participation of SAR, NGOs and psychologists.

119. In 2011, a media campaign for creation of a favourable environment, supportive of the integration of refugees, was held. In 2013 and 2014, joint declarations of the President and the Prime Minister were presented aiming at identifying measures against xenophobia and racial hatred. A position against inciting hatred, xenophobia, violence and discrimination was expressed also by the academic community, NGO's and the media.

120. Free legal consultations and assistance has been provided to foreigners seeking protection. A mechanism for accelerated transfer of foreigners from the vulnerable groups to the SAR has been established. Interpreters from rare languages have been provided, including, in case of necessity of medical and psychological consultation.

121. The measures taken have allowed Bulgaria to contain the emergency situation and to avoid its turning into a real crisis. The **living conditions** in all existing accommodation places are being constantly improved. The progress is most visible in the RC. A full-scale refurbishment of the two newly established accommodation centres in Sofia has been made. New centres for more than 3,000 persons have been opened. The RC of the SAR increased from 3 to 7. In 2014, the total capacity of the SAR for accommodation of asylum seekers reached 6,000 beds, meeting the minimum standards of the EU. There is a possibility for

refugees to be accommodated in municipal apartments. The refugees enjoy financial support to cover the rent and partially the monthly utilities.

122. An electronic registry for immediate **registration** of persons with special needs, vulnerable and unaccompanied minors has been implemented. The development of integrated card system for information on admission, placement and care of applicants has been started. Tutoring and special intercultural training for unaccompanied minors has been organized with the help of NGOs. **Assistance** has been provided to families with children for filling in and submitting documents to the SADs. Intermediary services have been provided at the social services by the Integration Centre and by social mediators.

123. The Asylum and Refugees Act and the Public Education Act guarantee an opportunity for the children of refugees and migrant workers **to attend Bulgarian schools** under the same conditions as the Bulgarian children. A Bulgarian language curriculum has also been developed for teaching of migrant pupils at the primary education stage. Refugees acquire knowledge in the Bulgarian language, in culture and professional training and enjoy a social protection package. The information on the integration process is available in English, Arabic, Persian and Dari. Foreigners on the verge of adulthood (17–18 years of age) receive a refugee status and can join the integration programme. In all territorial units of SAR care programs for preschool and school age children have been organized. Assistance has been provided for the legalization of documents, preparation for examination before the regional inspectorates of education, selection and enrolment for children over 6 years of age, and wishing to be involved in the Bulgarian public school system. One of the RC has been designated for unaccompanied children and women with children.

124. Having received a refugee status, asylum-seekers acquire equal rights with those of the Bulgarian citizens in the field of **employment**. The Crafts Act provides for foreigners, persons with refugee or humanitarian status who have practiced some craft abroad but cannot present documents to be allowed to stand an exam.

125. The SAR organized: vocational training after successful completion of Bulgarian language courses for receiving profession qualification degree; information meetings to inform mediation services and specialized job fairs for direct marketing and negotiating jobs between employers and refugees; joint projects with NGOs, volunteers and academic communities aimed at cultural adaptation and social orientation.

126. Foreigners who have been granted permanent residence receive **medical care** on an equal footing with Bulgarian citizens. Children who have not attained the age of 18 years and older, if attending school as full-time students, until completion of secondary or higher education shall be health-insured by the State Budget and entitled to free medical and social care.

P. Freedom of media (recommendation 80.83)

127. The legislation ensures protection and conditions for promotion of competition and free economic initiative, including in the media market. The Commission for Protection of Competition is empowered to enforce the law, and its activities cover all requests on ascertaining infringements of free market competition.

128. Amendments to the Mandatory Deposit of Copies of Printed and Other Works Act introduced the requirement for all publishers of periodical printed media to submit a declaration to the Ministry of Culture identifying the actual owner of the media.

129. The CEM monitors compliance with the requirements regarding the transparency of the capital and property of the natural and legal persons applying for a radio and television

broadcasting licence. The CEM maintains a public register of legal entities controlling the management of media operators. A licence for radio and television broadcasting activities is granted according to a public procedure, setting non-discriminatory requirements to the applicants.

130. The PC does not specify crimes against journalists. It however provides for the possibility for the court to consider as aggravating circumstance the graver social risk arising from maleficent violations of freedom of speech.

Q. Freedom of association and freedom of expression (recommendation 80.85)

131. The right of peaceful assembly and association is fully guaranteed by the Constitution and the relevant legislation to every person without discrimination, and in full conformity with the international legal obligations. There are no obstacles for the registration of political parties, provided that all the formal requirements of the Political Parties Act are met. These requirements are clear and applicable to everyone without exception and/or discrimination. The importance of the right of free expression and dissemination of opinion and the right to seek, receive and disseminate information has been persistently emphasized in the practice of the Constitutional Court.

Notes

[1] IHRTs - International Human Rights Treaties
[2] NAP – National Action Plan
[3] NRISRB – National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria
[4] WGs – Working Groups
[5] APs – Action Plans
[6] CM of the CE – Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
[7] ICESCR – International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
[8] ICPPED – International Convention on Protection all Persons from Enforced Disappearance
[9] LADI – Legal Aid Development Initiative
[10] MoU – Memorandum of Understanding
[11] NSPGE – National Strategy for Promotion of Gender Equality
[12] NP – National Plan
[13] NRPRB – National Reform Programme of the Republic of Bulgaria
[14] NAPE – National Action Plan on Employment
[15] OPHRD - Operational Programme Human Resources Development
[16] NPPC – National Program for Prevention and Control
[17] IWG – Intergovernmental Working Group
[18] NRISRB – National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria
[19] These include:
- the NRPRB;
- the Framework Programme for Integration of Roma into the Bulgarian Society (FPIRBS) (2012–2020);
- the Strategy for Education of Children and Student from Ethnic Minorities (SEICSEM);
- the Health Strategy for Disadvantaged Persons belonging to Ethnic Minorities (HSDPBEM) (2005–2015);
- the National Programme for Improvement of the Housing Conditions of Roma in the Republic of Bulgaria (NPIHCRRB) (2005–2015);
- the NAP to the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 Initiative".

[20] EICPEM – Educational Integration of Children and Pupils from Ethnic Minorities

[21] During the 2012/2013 school year the Centre has supported 23 projects for educational integration of pupils from ethnic minority groups.
[22] RSSDESL – Reducing the Share of School Dropouts and Early School Leavers
[23] TAHCLE – Training against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement
[24] PPDV – Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence
[25] EASO – European Asylum Support Office